IN THE CLAIMS:

The text of all pending claims, (including withdrawn claims) is set forth below. Cancelled and not entered claims are indicated with claim number and status only. The claims as listed below show added text with underlining and deleted text with ~~strikethrough~~. The status of each claim is indicated with one of (original), (currently amended), (cancelled), (withdrawn), (new), (previously presented), or (not entered).

Please AMEND claims 1, 10, 12-15, 27, 39, 41 and 43 in accordance with the following:

1. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A method of adding background sound to a voice mail message, comprising:

providing sound samples for selection by a user;

receiving an indication of a selected sound sample; and

combining the selected sound sample with a recorded voice message to form a combination message, and

looping the selected sound sample as background sound upon determining a time duration of the selected sound sample is less than a time duration of the selected sound sample.

2. (ORIGINAL) The method according to claim 1, wherein the providing occurs after the voice message is recorded.

3. (ORIGINAL) The method according to claim 1, wherein the providing occurs before the voice message is recorded.

4. (ORIGINAL) The method according to claim 3, further comprising playing the selected sound sample to the user while the user records the voice message.

5. (ORIGINAL) The method according to claim 4, further comprising playing the combination message to the user.

6. (ORIGINAL) The method according to claim 5, further comprising prompting the user to select one of storing the combination message and repeating the providing until the user selects storing the combination message.

7. (ORIGINAL) The method according to claim 1, further comprising storing the

combination message.

8. (ORIGINAL) The method according to claim 1, wherein the combining includes adding the selected sound sample to the recorded voice message.

9. (ORIGINAL) The method according to claim 1, further comprising playing the combination message after the combining is completed.

10. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method according to claim 1, ~~further comprising~~ wherein the looping the selected sound sample is for a time duration equal to a time duration of the recorded voice message.

11. (ORIGINAL) The method according to claim 7, further comprising depositing the stored combination message in a mailbox of a recipient.

12. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method according to claim 11, wherein the recipient performs at least one of retrieving and listening to the combination message and forwarding the combination message to a third-party recipient.

13. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method according to claim 12, further comprising the recipient separating the recorded voice message from the selected sound sample.

14. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method according to claim 13, further comprising the recipient playing the separated recorded voice message without the selected sound sample.

15. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method according to claim 14, further comprising the recipient forwarding the separated recorded voice message without the selected sound sample to ~~a~~ the third-party recipient.

16. (ORIGINAL) The method according to claim 1, further comprising receiving the sound samples from the user.

17. (ORIGINAL) The method according to claim 1, further comprising listing the sound samples at a web site.

18. (ORIGINAL) The method according to claim 17, further playing the sounds samples through the web site.

19. (ORIGINAL) The method according to claim 18, further comprising receiving at least one sound sample from the user via the web site.

20. (ORIGINAL) The method according to claim 1, further comprising storing the recorded voice message with an identifier corresponding to the selected sound sample.

21. (ORIGINAL) The method according to claim 20, further comprising:
retrieving the stored voice message and the identifier;
retrieving the sound sample corresponding to the identifier;
combining the selected sound sample and the recorded voice message; and
reproducing the combination for a recipient.

22. (ORIGINAL) The method according to claim 1, further comprising storing the selected sound sample together with the recorded voice message in a storage device.

23. (ORIGINAL) The method according to claim 22, wherein the selected sound sample and the recorded voice message are stored next to each other in the storage device.

24. (ORIGINAL) The method according to claim 22, wherein the selected sound sample and the recorded voice message are linked together in the storage device.

25. (ORIGINAL) The method according to claim 22, further comprising:
retrieving the stored sound sample and the recorded voice message;
combining the stored sound sample and the recorded voice message; and
reproducing the combination for a recipient.

26. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A voice mail message, comprising:
a message area containing at least a voice message and each of

an audio stationary header preceding the message area,

an audio stationary footer following the message area, and

an audio stationary body occurring at least once in said message area in combination with the voice message.

27. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) An apparatus comprising:

a storage device storing a recorded voice message and sound samples; and

a processor, coupled to the storage device, to provide the sound samples to a user and to combine a selected sound sample with the recorded voice message to form a combination message, wherein upon the selected sound sample being selected as background sound and upon determining a time duration of the selected sound sample is less than the a time duration of the selected sound sample, the selected sound sample is looped.

28. (ORIGINAL) The apparatus according to claim 27, wherein the storage device stores the combination message.

29. (ORIGINAL) The apparatus according to claim 27, wherein the processor plays the selected sound sample while the voice message is being recorded by the user.

30. (ORIGINAL) The apparatus according to claim 27, wherein the processor stores the voice message in the storage device with an identifier corresponding to the selected sound sample.

31. (ORIGINAL) The apparatus according to claim 30, wherein the processor prompts the user to select another one of the sound samples and replaces the identifier corresponding to the selected sound sample with an identifier corresponding to the another one of the sound samples.

32. (ORIGINAL) The apparatus according to claim 30, wherein when a message recipient accesses the storage device to retrieve the recorded voice message, the processor retrieves the selected sound sample corresponding to the identifier from the storage device, combines the selected sound sample with the recorded voice message and reproduces the combination for a recipient.

33. (ORIGINAL) The apparatus according to claim 27, wherein

the storage device stores an audio stationary file corresponding to the user, the audio stationary file including at least one of an audio header, an audio footer and an audio body, and

the processor combines the recorded voice message with the audio body, adds the audio header to a beginning of the voice message and adds the audio footer to an end of the voice message.

34. (ORIGINAL) The apparatus according to claim 27, further comprising a web interface, wherein the sound samples are listed at a web site connected to the apparatus via the web interface and the processor receives the selected sound sample, together with an identifier corresponding to the user, via the web interface.

35. (ORIGINAL) The apparatus according to claim 34, wherein the processor receives additional sound samples from the user.

36. (ORIGINAL) The apparatus according to claim 34, wherein the processor extracts sound data corresponding to the selected sound sample and stores the sound data in the storage device together with the identifier corresponding to the user.

37. (ORIGINAL) The apparatus according to claim 27, wherein the processor records at least one sound sample provided via a communication device by the user and stores the at least one sound sample in the storage device with an identifier corresponding to the user.

38. (ORIGINAL) The apparatus according to claim 28, wherein the processor provides access to the combination message stored in the storage device.

39. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A voice mail platform comprising:

means for providing sound samples for selection by a user; ~~and~~

means for receiving an indication of a selected sound sample; ~~and~~

means for combining a selected sound sample with a recorded voice message to form a combination message; and

means for looping the selected sound sample upon the selected sound sample being a background sound.

40. (ORIGINAL) A method of providing ambient sound to a recorded voice message, comprising:

receiving a call from a caller;

prompting the caller to select a sound sample;

recording a voice message from the caller;

adding the voice message to the selected sound sample to form a combination message, wherein the sound sample is looped for a duration equaling a duration of the voice message; and

storing the combination message in a storage device.

41. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A method of adding background sound to a greeting, comprising:

providing sound samples for selection by a recipient;

receiving an indication of a selected sound sample; ~~and~~

combining the selected sound sample with a recorded greeting to form a combination greeting; and

looping the background sound.

42. (CANCELLED)

43. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A method of combining sound with a recorded voice message comprising:

recording a voice message from a caller;

prompting the caller to select one of a plurality of sound samples; and

combining the voice message with the selected sound sample to form a combination message, the selected sound sample being looped for a duration corresponding to a duration of the voice message.